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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, March 25, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "WASHABLE WASH DRESSES." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Listeners, the story I have to tell you today is a true story of three little wash frocks that went to the laundry -- and ever after stayed at home. Three little ready-made dresses these were with a come-hither look for the shopper. They had plenty of style at bargain prices.

The first was a dainty crisp pink organdie with puffed sleeves and lots of frills and even cute little gathered pockets -- the kind of a dress that makes you think of a summer afternoon party. All went well with this dress until it reached the wash tub. But after that first bath, its party days were over forever. Those dainty beguiling ruffles were too flimsy to stand washing, so they came out "bewhiskered" and drooping. As for the seams, they frayed and pulled out because they had been cut too close and not firmly finished. The organdie itself that had looked so crisp and fresh in the store, turned out to be a limp and sleazy fabric after its "dressing" or "filling" came out in the wash tub. But the troubles of this organdie dress were not all in the washing. The dress wouldn't iron well either. Those puffed sleeves -- no iron could manage them. Those gathered pockets were another pressing problem. And so were the frills.

Well, that was one "wash dress" that couldn't take a wash. Its so-called "washable" fabric was never the same after washing. Its construction wasn't firm enough for washing. And its style made ironing difficult. So that little party dress stayed home after its first bath.

The second dress was a neat, trim blue cotton print. A plain nicely finished dress it was with little white collars and cuffs -- the kind of summer wash dress that you expect to depend on for regular daytime wear.

Its owner wasn't afraid to wash it since a tag attached said "Washable" and since it was selling on a counter of "wash dresses." But just the same, it chrank so that it never fitted her again. And its blue color ran into its white collar. As for its covered metal buttons, they rusted.

Dress number 3 was a heavy crepe synthetic. It also had its troubles in the wash-tub and later on the ironing board. The crepe material drew up so close that it took endless difficult pressing to bring it back to its normal shape and size. And worse than that, it stuck to the iron during pressing. In fact, you could only press it with a warm iron. It actually looked glassy and melted on the surface if you applied much heat.



Well, that's the story of three little wash frocks that went to the wash tub and the adventures -- sad adventures -- that befell them there. And I wouldn't tell such a gloomy story on a nice day like this if I didn't suspect that this story would repeat itself many times this season unless women shoppers are wiser than we have been other summers.

But now let me tell you a cheerful story of the ready-made summer dresses that have taken tubbings beautifully -- and why. Some of the most successful summer wash dresses have been made of fabrics of a smooth even weave that would wash and iron easily. Dresses guaranteed by the manufacturer as "completely shrunk" and "fast to sun and washing" -- these dresses also took their tubbings without disaster. The frocks that were easiest to iron were of simple design. All trimming was either removable or washable. And the buttons and buckles on these frocks were made to stand washing without breaking or rusting or losing their color.

More than this, these successful wash dresses had washable construction. That is, they had seams that would wash without pulling out -- seams made to suit the material. All stitching both at seams and elsewhere on the dresses was firm and even. All hems were put in by hand. Buttonholes were carefully and firmly worked so they would not fray or pull out. And all packets had reinforced corners. Heavy fabrics like linen had firm but not thick and bulky finishes.

Another reason why these dresses kept their looks through long wear and many washings was that they fitted their owners so well. They had no tight places to pull out, no skimpy skirts that wouldn't allow for comfortable walking and sitting. Their owners hadn't bought them by guess or by the haphazard method of holding them up and estimating their fit. These dresses had been tried on and examined from all sides.

Listeners, that's the end of the story about the frocks that went to the wash tub and what happened to them. But if you want further help on buying spring or summer ready-made dresses, I am sure you know by this time where to get it. Write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., for the little leaflet called "Quality Guides for Buying Ready-Made Dresses." A copy is yours for the asking if you write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington while the free supply lasts.

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